

J. Hogge
THE
DISTREST MOTHER.
A
TRAGEDY.

AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRES-ROYAL
IN
DRURY-LANE
AND
COVENT-GARDEN.

By Mr. AMB. PHILIPS.



THE UNITARIAN COLLEGE
VICTORIA PARK
MANCHESTER 14

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by W. OXLADE, at *Shakespeare's*
Head, [No. 35,] in George-Street, Old-Bailey.

M,DCC,LXXV.

P R O L O G U E,

Written by Mr. S T E E L E.

SINCE Fancy of itself is loose and vain,
The Wise by Rules that airy Power restrain:
They think those Writers mad, who at their Ease
Convey this House and Audience where they please:
Who Nature's stated Distances confound:
And make this Spot all Soils the Sun goes round:
'Tis nothing, when a fancy'd Scene's in view,
To skip from Covent-Garden to Peru.

But Shakespear's Selftransgress'd; and shall each Elf,
Each Pigmy Genius, quote great Shakespear's Self!
What Critick dares prescribe what's just and fit,
Or mark out Limits for such boundless Wit!
Shakespear cou'd travel thro' Earth, Sea and Air,
And point out all the Powers and Wonders there.
In barren Desarts he makes Nature smile,
And gives us Feasts in his Enchanted Isle.

Our Author does his feeble Force confess,
Nor dares pretend such Merit to transgress;
Does not such shining Gifts of Genius Share,
And therefore makes Propriety his Care.
Your Treat with study'd Decency he serves;
Not only Rules of Time and Place preserves,
But strives to keep his Characters intire,
With French Correctness, and with British fire.

This Piece presented in a foreign Tongue,
When France was glorious, and her Monarch young,
A hundred Times a crowded Audience drew;
A hundred Times repeated, still 'twas new.

Pyrrius provok'd, to no wild Rants betray'd,
Rejents his gen'rous Love so ill repay'd;
Does like a Man resent, a Prince upbraid.
His Sentiments disclose a Royal Mind,
Nor is he known a King from Guards behind.

Injur'd Hermione demands Relief;
But not from heavy Narratives of Grief:
In conscious Majesty her Pride is shewn;
Born to revenge her Wrongs, but not bemoan.

Andromache—If in our Author's Lines,
As in the great Original, she shines,
Nothing but from Barbarity she fears,
Attend with Silence, you'll applaud with Tears.

EPILOGUE,

Written by Mr. BUDGELL.

I Hope you'll own, that with becoming Art,
I've play'd my Game, and topp'd the Widow's Part.
My Spouse, poor Man! could not live out the Play,
But dy'd commodiously on the Wedding-Day,
While I, his Relict, made at one bold Fling
Myself a Princess, and young Sty a King.

You, Ladies, who protest a Lover's Pain,
And hear your Servants sigh whole Years in vain;
Which of you all would nat on Marriage venture,
Might she so soon upon her Jointure enter?

'Twas a strange Scape! had Pyrrhus liv'd till now,
I had been finely hamper'd in my Vow.

To die by one's own Hand, and fly the Charms
Of Love and Life in a young Monarch's Arms!

'Twere an hard Fate—ere I had undergone it
I might have took one Night—to think upon it,

But why, you'll say, was all this Grief express'd
For a first Husband, laid long since at rest?

Why so much Goldness to my kind Protector?

—Ah Ladies! had you known the good Man Hector!
Homer will tell you (or I'm mis-inform'd)

That when, enrag'd, the Grecian Camp he storm'd,
To break the ten-fold Barriers of the Gate,

He threw a Stone of such prodigious Weight,
As no two Men could lift, not even those,

Who in that Age of thund'ring Mortals rose:

—It would have sprain'd a Dozen modern Beaux.

At length howe'er I laid my Weeds aside,
And sunk the Widow in the well-dress'd Bride.

In you it still remains to grace the Play,

And bless with Joy my Coronation-Day:

Take then, ye Circles of the Brave and Fair,

The Fatherless and Widow to your Care.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M E N.

PYRRHUS, the Son of Achilles, and King of Epirus, in Love with Andromache, but betrothed to Hermione.

PHOENIX, Counsellor to Pyrrhus.

ORESTES, the Son of Agamemnon, Ambassador from the Greeks to Pyrrhus, in Love with Hermione.

PYLADES, Friend to Orestes, separated from him in a Storm, driven on the Coasts of Epirus, and detained by contrary Winds in the Court of Pyrrhus.

W O M E N.

ANDROMACHE, Hector's Widow, Captive to Pyrrhus, and Mother to Astyanax.

CEPHISA, Confidante to Andromache.

HERMIONE, Daughter to Menelaüs and Helen, betrothed to Pyrrhus.

CLEONE, Confidante to Hermione.

Attendants to Pyrrhus and Orestes, &c.

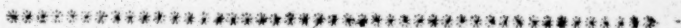
The **SCENE** a great Hall in the Court of Pyrrhus at Buthrotos, the Capital City of Epirus.

T H E



T H E

DISTRESS MOTHER.



ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.

O R E S T E S.

O Pylades! What's Life without a Friend!
At Sight of thee my gloomy Soul cheers up;
My hopes revive, and Gladness dawns with-
in me.

After an Absence of six tedious Moons,
How cou'd I hope to find my Pylades,
My Joy, my Comfort! on this fatal Shore?
E'en in the Court of Pyrrhus? in these Realms,
These hated Realms, so cross to all my wishes?
Oh, my brave Friend! may no blind Stroke of Fate
Divide us more, and tear me from myself.

Pyl. O Prince! O my Orestes! O my Friend!—
Thus let me speak the welcome of my Heart. [*embracing*]
Since I have gain'd this unexpected Meeting,
Blest be the Powers who barr'd my way to Greece,
And kept me here! e'er since th' unhappy Day,
When warring Winds (Epirus full in view)
Sunder'd our Barks on the loud stormy Main.

Orest. It was, indeed, a Morning full of Horror!

Pyl. A thousand boding Cares have rack'd my Soul
In your Behalf. Often, with Tears, I mourn'd
The fatal Ills, in which your Life's involv'd;
And grudg'd you Dangers, which I could not share.
I fear'd to what Extremes the black Despair,
That prey'd upon your Mind, might have betray'd you;
And lest the Gods, in pity to your Woes,
Should hear your Pray'rs, and take the Life you loath'd.
But now with Joy I see you!—The Retinue
And num'rous Followers that surround you here,
Speak better Fortunes, and a Mind dispos'd
To relish Life.

8 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Orest. Alas! my Friend, who knows
The Destiny, to which I stand reserv'd;
I come in search of an inhuman Fair;
And live or die, as she decrees my Fate.

Pyl. You much surprize me, Prince!—I thought
you cur'd

Of your un pity'd, unsuccessful Passion.
Why, in Epirus, should you hope to find
Hermione, less cruel, than at Sparta?
I thought her Pride, and the disdainful Manner,
In which she treated all your constant Suff'rings,
Had broke your Fetters, and assur'd your Freedom:
Asham'd of your Repulse and slighted Vows,
You hated her; you talk'd of her no more:
Prince, you deceiv'd me.

Orest. I deceiv'd myself.
Do not upbraid th' unhappy Man, that loves thee.
Thou know'st, I never hid my Passion from thee;
Thou saw'st it in its Birth, and in its Progress.
And when at last the hoary King her Father,
Great Menelaüs, gave away his Daughter,
His lovely Daughter to this happy Pyrrhus,
Th' Avenger of his Wrongs; thou saw'st my Grief,
My Torture, my Despair; and how I dragg'd,
From Sea to Sea, a heavy Chain of Woes.
O Pylades! my Heart has bled within me,
To see thee, prest with Sorrows not thy own,
Still wand'ring with me like a banish'd Man!
Watchful, and anxious for thy wretched Friend,
To temper the wild Transports of my Mind,
And save me from myself.

Pyl. Why thus unkind?
Why will you envy me the pleasing Tasks
Of gen'rous Love and sympathizing Friendship?

Orest. Thou Miracle of Truth—But hear me on.
When, in the midst of my disastrous Fate,
I thought how the Divine Hermione,
Deaf to my Vows, regardless of my Complaints,
Gave up herself, in all her Charms, to Pyrrhus;
Thou may'st remember, I abhorr'd her Name,
Strove to forget her, and repay her Scorn.

I made my Friends, and e'en myself, believe
My Soul was freed. Alas! I did not see,
That all the Malice of my Heart was Love.
Triumphing thus, and yet a Captive still,

The DISTREST MOTHER. 9

In Greece I landed: And in Greece I found
Th' assembled Princes all alarm'd with Fears,
In which their common Safety seem'd concern'd.
I join'd them: For I hop'd that War and Glory
Might fill my Mind, and take up all my Thoughts:
And that my shatter'd Soul, impair'd with Grief,
Once more would reassume its wonted Vigour,
And ev'ry idle Passion quit my Breast.

Pyl. The Thought was worthy Agamemnon's Son.

Orest. But see the strange Perverseness of my Stars,
Which throws me on the Rock I strove to shun!
The jealous Chiefs, and all the States of Greece,
With one united Voice, complain of Pyrrhus;
That now, forgetful of the Promise given,
And mindless of his God-like Father's Fate,
Astyanax he nurses in his Court;
Astyanax, the young, surviving Hope
Of ruin'd Troy; Astyanax, descended
From a long Race of Kings; great Hector's Son.

Pyl. A Name still dreadful in the Ears of Greece!
But, Prince, you'll cease to wonder, why the Child
Lives thus protected in the Court of Pyrrhus;
When you shall hear, the bright Andromache,
His lovely Captive, charms him from his Purpose:
The Mother's Beauty guards the helpless Son.

Orest. Your Tale confirms what I have heard; and
hence

Spring all my Hopes. Since my proud Rival woos
Another Partner to his Throne and Bed,
Hermione may still be mine. Her Father,
The injur'd Menelaus, thinks already
His Daughter slighted, and th' intended Nuptials
Too long delay'd. I heard his loud Complaints
With secret Pleasure; and was glad to find
Th' ungrateful Maid neglected in her Turn,
And all my Wrongs aveng'd in her Disgrace.

Pyl. Oh! may you keep your just Resentments
warm!

Orest. Resentments? Oh, my Friend, too soon I
found

They grew not out of Hatred! I'm betray'd:
I practise on myself; and fondly plot
My own Undoing. Goaded on by Love,
I canvass'd all the Suffrages of Greece;
And here I come their sworn Ambassador,
To

10 The DISTREST MOTHER.

To speak their Jealousies, and claim this Boy.

Pyl. Pyrrhus will treat your Embassy with Scorn,
Full of Achilles, his redoubted Sire;
Pyrrhus is proud, impetuous, headstrong, fierce;
Made up of Passions: Will he then be sway'd,
And give to Death the Son of her he loves?

Orest. Oh, would he render up Hermione,
And keep Aftyanax, I should be blest!
He must; he shall: Hermione's my Life,
My Soul, my Rapture!—I'll no longer curb
The strong Desire that hurries me to Madness;
I'll give a Loose to Love; I'll bear her hence;
I'll tear her from his Arms; I'll—O, ye Gods!
Give me Hermione, or let me die!—
But tell me, Pylades; how stand my Hopes?
Is Pyrrhus still enamour'd with her Charms?
Or dost thou think he'll yield me up the Prize,
The dear, dear Prize, which he has ravish'd from me?

Pyl. I dare not flatter your fond Hopes so far;
The King, indeed, cold to the Spartan Princess,
Turns all his Passion to Andromache,
Hector's afflicted Widow. But in vain,
With interwoven Love and Rage, he sues
The charming Captive, obstinately cruel.
Oft he alarms her for her Child, confin'd
Apart; and when her Tears begin to flow,
As soon he stops them, and recalls his Threats.
Hermione a thousand Times has seen
His ill-requited Vows return to her;
And takes his Indignation all for Love.
What can be gather'd from a Man so various?
He may, in the Disorder of his Soul,
Wed her he hates, and punish her he loves.

Orest. But tell me, how the wrong'd Hermione
Brooks her slow Nuptials, and dishonour'd Charms?

Pyl. Hermione would fain be thought to scorn
Her wavering Lover, and disclaim his Faithhood;
But, spite of all her Pride, and conscious Beauty,
She mourns in secret her neglected Charms;
And oft has made me privy to her Tears:
Still threatens to be gone; yet still she stays;
And sometimes sighs, and wishes for Orestes.

Orest. Ah! were those Wishes from her Heart, my
Friend,
I'd fly in Transport—

[Flourish within.
Pyl.

THE DISTREST MOTHER. 11

Pyl. Hear!—The King approaches
To give you Audience. Speak your Embassy
Without Reserve: Urge the Demands of Greece;
And in the Name of all her Kings require,
That Hector's Son be given into your Hands.
Pyrrhus, instead of granting what they ask,
To speed his Love, and win the Trojan Dame,
Will make it Merit to preserve her Son.
But, see; he comes!

Orest. Mean while, my Pylades,
Go, and dispose Hermione to see
Her Lover, who is come thus far, to throw
Himself in all his Sorrows at her Feet.

S C E N E II.

ORESTES, PYRRHUS, and PHOENIX.

Orest. Before I speak the Message of the Greeks,
Permit me, Sir, to glory in the Title
Of their Ambassador; since I behold
Troy's Vanquisher, and great Achilles' Son.
Nor does the Son rise short of such a Father:
If Hector fell by him, Troy fell by you.
But, what your Father never would have done,
You do. You cherish the Remains of Troy;
And, by an ill-tim'd Pity, keep alive
The dying Embers of a Ten-years War.
Have you so soon forgot the mighty Hector?
The Greeks remember his high brandish'd Sword,
That fill'd their States with Widows and with Orphans:
For which they call for Vengeance on his Son.
Who knows what he may one Day prove? Who
knows

But he may brave us in our Ports; and, fill'd
With Hector's Fury, set our Fleets on blaze?
You may, yourself, live to repent your Mercy.
Comply, then, with the Grecians just Demands:
Satiating their Vengeance, and preserve yourself.

Pyr. The Greeks are for my Safety more concern'd
Than I desire. I thought your Kings were met
On more important Counsel. When I heard
The Name of their Ambassador, I hop'd
Some glorious Enterprize was taking Birth.
Is Agamemnon's Son dispatch'd for this?
And do the Grecian Chiefs, renown'd in War,
A Race of Heroes, join in close Debate,
To plot an Infant's Death?—What Right has Greece
To

12 The DISTREST MOTHER.

To ask his Life? Must I, must I alone,
Of all her scepter'd Warriors, be deny'd
To treat my Captive as I please? Know, Prince,
When Troy lay smoking on the Ground, and each
Proud Victor shar'd the Harvest of the War;
Andromache and this her Son were mine;
Were mine by Lot! And who shall wrest them from me?
Ulysses bore away old Priam's Queen;
Cassandra was your own great Father's Prize:
Did I concern myself in what they won?
Did I send Embassies to claim their Captives?

Orest. But, Sir, we fear, for you and for ourselves.
Troy may again revive, and a new Hector
Rise in Astyanax. Then think betimes—

Pyr. Let dastard Souls be timorously wise:
But tell them, Pyrrhus knows not how to form
Far fancy'd ills, and Dangers out of sight.

Orest. Sir, call to Mind th' unrivall'd Strength of Troy;
Her Walls, her Bulwarks, and her Gates of Brass;
Her Kings, her Heroes, and embattled Armies!

Pyr. I call them all to mind; and see them all.
Confus'd in Dust; all mixt in one wide Ruin;
All but a Child, and he in Bondage held.
What Vengeance can we fear from such a Troy?
If they have sworn t' extinguish Hector's Race,
Why was their Vow for twelve long Months deferr'd?
Why was he not in Priam's Bosom slain?
He should have fall'n among the slaughter'd Heaps,
Whelm'd under Troy. His Death had then been just.
When Age and Infancy, alike in vain,
Pleaded their Weakness; when the Heat of Conquest,
And Horrors of the Sight, rous'd all our Rage,
And blindly hurry'd us thro' Scenes of Death.
My Fury then was without Bounds: But now,
My Wrath appeas'd, must I be cruel still?
And, deaf to all the tender Calls of Pity,
Like a cool Murderer, bathe my Hands in Blood?
An Infant's Blood?—No, Prince—Go, bid the Greeks
Mark out some other Victim; my Revenge
Has had its Fill. What has escap'd from Troy
Shall not be sav'd to perish in Epirus.

Orest. I need not tell you, Sir, Astyanax
Was doom'd to Death in Troy; nor mention how
The crafty Mother sav'd her darling Son.
The Greeks do now but urge their former Sentence;

Nor

THE DISTREST MOTHER. 13

Nor is't the Boy, but Hector they pursue;
The Father draws their Vengeance on the Son:
The Father, who so oft in Grecian Blood
Has drench'd his Sword: The Father, whom the Greeks
May seek ev'n here.—Prevent them, Sir, in time.

Pyr. No! let them come; since I was born to wage
Eternal Wars. Let them now turn their Arms
On him, who conquer'd for them: Let them come,
And in Epirus seek another Troy.

'Twas thus they recompens'd my God-like Sire;
Thus was Achilles thank'd. But, Prince, remember,
Their black Ingratitude then cost them dear.

Orest. Shall Greece then find a Rebel Son in Pyrrhus?

Pyr. Have I then conquer'd to depend on Greece?

Orest. Hermione will sway your Soul to Peace,
And mediate 'twixt her Father and yourself:
Her Beauty will enforce my Embassy.

Pyr. Hermione may have her Charms; and I
May love her still, tho' not her Father's Slave.
I may in time give Proofs, that I'm a Lover;
But never must forget, that I'm a King.
Mean while, Sir, you may see fair Helen's Daughter:
I know how near in Blood you stand ally'd.
That done, you have my Answer, Prince. The
Greeks

No doubt expect your quick Return.

SCENE III.

PYRRHUS and PHOENIX.

Phæn. Sir, do you send your Rival to the Princess?

Pyr. I'm told, that he has lov'd her long.

Phæn. If so,

Have you not Cause to fear the smother'd Flame
May kindle at her Sight, and blaze a-new?
And she be wrought to listen to his Passion?

Pyr. Ay, let them, Phœnix, let them love their Fill!
Let them go hence; let them depart together;
Together let them sail for Sparta: All my Ports
Are open to them both. From what Constraint,
What irksome Thoughts should I be then reliev'd!

Phæn. But, Sir—

Pyr. I shall another time, good Phœnix,
Unbosom to thee all my Thoughts:—For, see,
Andromache appears.

SCENE

14 The DISTREST MOTHER.

SCENE IV.

PYRRHUS, ANDROMACHE, and CEPHISA.

Pyr. May I, Madam,

Flatter my Hopes so far, as to believe
You came to seek me here?

And. This Way, Sir, leads

To those Apartments, where you guard my Son.
Since you permit me, once a Day, to visit
All I have left of Hector, and of Troy;
I go to weep a few sad Moments with him.
I have not yet, to-day, embrac'd my Child;
I have not held him in my widow'd Arms.

Pyr. Ah, Madam! should the Threats of Greece
prevail,

You'll have Occasion for your Tears, indeed!

And. Alas! what Threats? What can alarm the
Greeks?

There are no Trojans left!

Pyr. Their Hate to Hector

Can never die: The Terror of his Name
Still shakes their Souls, and makes them dread his Son.

And. A mighty Honour for victorious Greece
To fear an Infant, a poor friendless Child!
Who smiles in Bondage; nor yet knows himself
The Son of Hector, and the Slave of Pyrrhus.

Pyr. Weak as he is, the Greeks demand his Life;
And send no less than Agamemnon's Son,
To fetch him hence.

And. And, Sir, do you comply
With such demands!—This Blow is aim'd at me:
How should the Child avenge his slaughter'd Sire?
But, cruel Men! they will not have him live
To cheer my heavy Heart, and ease my Bonds.
I promis'd to myself in him a Son,
In him a Friend, a Husband, and a Father.
But I must suffer Sorrow heap'd on Sorrow;
And still the fatal Stroke must come from you.

Pyr. Dry up those Tears: I must not see you weep;
And know, I have reject'd their Demands.
The Greeks already threaten me with War:
But, should they arm, as once they did for Helen,
And hide the Adriatick with their Fleets;
Should they prepare a second ten Years Siege,
And lay my Towers and Palaces in Dust;
I am determin'd to defend your Son;

And

And rather die myself than give him up.
 But, Madam, in the midst of all these Dangers,
 Will you refuse me a propitious Smile?
 Hated of Greece, and prest on ev'ry Side,
 Let me not, Madam, while I fight your Cause,
 Let me not combat with your Cruelties;
 And count Andromache amongst my Foes.

And. Consider, Sir, how this will sound in Greece!
 How can so great a Soul betray such Weakness?
 Let not Men say, so gen'rous a Design
 Was but the Transport of a Heart in Love.

Pyr. Your Charms will justify me to the World.

And. How can Andromache, a Captive Queen,
 O'erwhelm'd with Grief, a Burden to herself,
 Harbour a Thought of Love? Alas! what Charms
 Have these unhappy Eyes, by you condemn'd
 To weep for ever?—Talk of it no more.—
 To rev'rence the Misfortune of a Foe;
 To succour the Distrest; to give the Son
 To an afflicted Mother; to repel
 Contend'rate Nations, leagu'd against his Life;
 Unbrib'd by Love, unterrify'd by Threats,
 To pity, to protect him: These are Cares,
 These are Exploits worthy Achilles' Son.

Pyr. Will your Resentments, then, endure for ever?
 Must Pyrrhus never be forgiven?—'Tis true,
 My Sword has often reek'd in Phrygian Blood,
 And carry'd Havock through your Royal Kindred.
 But you, fair Princess, amply have aveng'd
 Old Priam's vanquish'd House: And all the Woes,
 I brought on them, fall short of what I suffer.
 We both have suffer'd in our Turns: And now
 Our common Foes should teach us to unite.

And. Where does the Captive not behold a Foe?

Pyr. Forget the Term of Hatred; and behold
 A Friend in Pyrrhus! Give me but to hope,
 I'll free your Son; I'll be a Father to him:
 Myself will teach him to avenge the Trojans.
 I'll go in Person to chastise the Greeks,
 Both for your Wrongs and mine. Inspir'd by you,
 What wou'd I not achieve? Again shall Troy
 Rise from its Ashes: This right Arm shall fix
 Her Seat of Empire; and your Son shall reign.

And. Such Dreams of Greatness suit not my Condition:
 His Hopes of Empire perish'd with his Father.

16 The DISTREST MOTHER.

No; thou imperial City, ancient Troy,
Thou Pride of Asia, founded by the Gods;
Never, oh never! must we hope to see
Those Bulwarks rise, which Hector could not guard!—
Sir, all I wish for, is some quiet Exile;
Where far from Greece remov'd, and far from you,
I may conceal my Son, and mourn my Husband.
Your Love creates my Envy. Oh, return!
Return to your betroth'd Hermione.

Pyr. Why do you mock me thus? you know, I
cannot.

You know my Heart is yours: My Soul hangs on you:
You take up ev'ry Wish: My waking Thoughts,
And nightly Dreams are all employ'd on you.
'Tis true, Hermione was sent to share
My Throne and Bed; and would with Transport hear
The Vows, which you neglect.

And. She has no Troy,
No Hector to lament: She has not lost
A Husband by your Conquests. Such a Husband!
(Tormenting Thought!) whose Death alone has made
Your Sire immortal: Pyrrhus and Achilles
Are both grown great by my Calamities.

Pyr. Madam, 'tis well! 'Tis very well! I find,
Your will must be obey'd; Imperious Captive,
It shall. Henceforth I blot you from my Mind:
You teach me to forget your Charms; to hate you.
For know, inhuman Beauty, I have lov'd
Too well to treat you with Indifference.
Think well upon it: My disorder'd Soul
Wavers between th' Extremes of Love and Rage.
I've been too tame; I will awake to Vengeance!
The Son shall answer for the Mother's Scorn.
The Greeks demand him: Nor will I endanger
My Realms, to pleasure an ungrateful Woman.

And. Then he must die! alas, my Son must die!
He has no Friend, no Succour left, beside
His Mother's Tears, and his own Innocence.

Pyr. Go, Madam; visit this unhappy Son.
The Sight of him may bend your stubborn Heart;
And turn to Softness your unjust Disdain.
I shall once more expect your Answer. Go;
And think, while you embrace the Captive Boy,
Think, that his Life depends on your Resolves.

SCENE

The DISTREST MOTHER. 17

S C E N E V.

ANDROMACHE and CEPHISA.

And. I'll go; and in the Anguish of my Heart,
Weep o'er my Child—If he must die, my Life
Is wrapt in his; I shall not long survive.
'Tis for his Sake, that I have suffer'd Life;
Groan'd in Captivity; and out-liv'd Hector.
Yes, my Astyanax; we'll go together!
Together to the Realms of Night we'll go!
There to thy ravish'd Eyes thy Sire I'll show,
And point him out among the shades below.

+++++

A C T II. S C E N E I.

HERMIONE and CLEONE.

HERMIONE.

WELL, I'll be rul'd, Cleone: I will see him;
I have told Pylades, that he may bring him,
But trust me, were I left to my own Thoughts,
I should forbid him yet.

Cleo. And why forbid him?

Is he not, Madam, still the same Orestes?
Orestes, whose Return you oft have wish'd?
The Man whose Sufferings you so oft lamented,
And often prais'd his Constancy and Love?

Her. That Love, that Constancy, so ill requited,
Upbraids me to myself! I blush, to think
How I have us'd him; and would shun his Presence.
What will be my Confusion when he sees me
Neglected, and forsaken, like himself!
Will he not say, Is this the scornful Maid,
The proud Hermione, that tyranniz'd
In Sparta's Court? And triumph'd in her Charms?
Her Insolence at last is well repaid.
I cannot bear the Thought.

Cleo. You wrong yourself
With unbecoming Fears. He knows too well
Your Beauty and your Worth. Your Lover comes not
To offer Insults; but repeat his Vows,
And breathe his ardent Passion at your Feet.
But, Madam, what's your Royal Father's Will?
What Orders do your Letters bring from Sparta?

Her. His Orders are, if Pyrrhus still delay
The Nuptials, and refuse to sacrifice

18 THE DISTREST MOTHER.

This Trojan Boy. I should with speed embark,
And with their Embassy return to Greece.

Cleo. What would you more? Orestes comes in time
To save your Honour. Pyrrhus cools apace:
Prevent his Falshood; and forsake him first.
I know you hate him: You have told me so.

Her. Hate him! My injur'd Honour bids me hate him.
Th' ungrateful Man! to whom I fondly gave
My Virgin Heart; the Man I lov'd so dearly;
The Man I loved on! Oh, my Cleone!
How is it possible I should not hate him?

Cleo. Then give him over, Madam. Quit his Court;
And with Orestes—

Her. No! I must have time
To work up all my Rage! To meditate
A Parting, full of Horror! My Revenge
Will be but too much quicken'd by the Traitor.

Cleo. Do you then wait new Insults? New Affronts?
To draw you from your Father! Then to leave you!
In his own Court to leave you,—for a Captive!
If Pyrrhus can provoke you, he has done it.

Her. Why dost thou heighten my Distress? I fear
To search out my own Thoughts, and sound my Heart.
Be blind to what thou seest: Believe me cur'd:
Flatter my Weakness; tell me I have conquer'd:
Think, that my injur'd Soul is set against him;
And do thy best to make me think so too.

Cleo. Why would you loiter here, then?

Her. Let us fly!

Let us be gone! I leave him to his Captive:
Let him go kneel and supplicate his Slave,
Let us be gone!—But, what if he repent?
What, if the perjur'd Prince again submit,
And sue for Pardon? What, if he renew
His former Vows?—But, oh the faithless Man!
He slights me! drives to Extremities!—However,
I'll stay, Cleone, to perplex their Loves:
I'll stay, till, by an open Breach of Contract,
I make him hateful to the Greeks. Already
Their Vengeance have I drawn upon the Son:
Their second Embassy shall claim the Mother:
I will redouble all my Grievs upon her!

Cleo. Ah, Madam, whither does your Rage transport
you?

Andromache, alas, is innocent!

THE DISTREST MOTHER. 19

A Woman plung'd in Sorrow ; dead to Love :
And, when she thinks of Pyrrhus, 'tis with Horror

Her. Would I had done so too !—He had not then
Betray'd my easy Faith.—But I, alas !
Discover'd all the Fondness of my Soul ;
I made no Secret of my Passion to him :
Nor thought it dangerous to be sincere.

My Eyes, my Tongue, my Actions spoke my Heart.

Cleo. Well might you speak, without Reserve, to one
Engag'd to you by solemn Oaths and Treaties.

Her. His Ardour too was an Excuse to mine :
With other Eyes he saw me then !—Cleone,
Thou may'st remember, ev'ry thing conspir'd
To favour him : My Father's Wrongs aveng'd ;
The Greeks triumphant ; Fleets of Trojan Spoils ;
His mighty Sire's, his own immortal Fame ;
His eager Love !—All, all conspir'd against me !
—But I have done :—I'll think no more of Pyrrhus,
Orestes wants not Merit : And he loves me.

My Gratitude, my Honour, both plead for him :
And if I've Power o'er my own Heart, 'tis his.

Cleo. Madam, he comes—

Her. Alas ! I did not think
He was so near !—I wish I might not see him !

SCENE II.

HERMIONE, CLEONE, and ORESTES.

Her. How am I to interpret, Sir, this Visit ?
Is it a Compliment of Form, or Love ?

Orest. Madam, you know my Weakness. 'Tis my Fate
To love unpity'd : To desire to see you ;
And still to swear each time shall be the last.
My Passion breaks through my repeated Oaths ;
And ev'ry time I visit you, I'm perjur'd.
Ev'n now, I find my Wounds all bleed afresh :
I blush to own it ; but I know no Cure.
I call the Gods to witness, I have try'd
Whatever Man could do, (but try'd in vain)
To wear you from my Mind. Through stormy Seas,
And savage Climes, in a whole Year of Absence,
I courted Dangers, and I long'd for Death.

Her. Why will you, Prince, indulge this mourn-
ful Tale ?

It ill becomes th' Ambassador of Greece
To talk of Dying, and of Love. Remember
The Kings you represent : Shall their Revenge

10 The DISTREST MOTHER

Be disappointed by your ill-tim'd Passion?
Discharge your Embassy: 'Tis not Orestes
The Greeks desire should die.

Orest. My Embassy
Is at an End: For Pyrrhus has refus'd
To give up Hector's Son. Some hidden Power
Protects the Boy.

Her. Faithless, ungrateful Man! [*Aside.*]

Orest. I now prepare for Greece. But, ere I go,
Would hear my final Doom pronounc'd by you.
What do I say?—I do already hear it!
My doom is fix'd: I read it in your Eyes!

Her. Will you then still despair? Be still suspicious?
What have I done? Wherein have I been cruel?
'Tis true, you find me in the Court of Pyrrhus:
But, 'twas my Royal Father sent me hither.
And who can tell, but I have shar'd your Griefs?
Have I ne'er wept in secret? Never wish'd
To see Orestes?

Orest. Wish'd to see Orestes!—
Oh Joy, Oh, Ecstasy! My Soul's intranc'd!
Oh charming Princess! Oh transcendent Maid!
My utmost Wish!—Thus, thus let me express
My boundless Thanks!—I never was unhappy—
Am I Orestes?—

Her. You are Orestes:
The same unalter'd, gen'rous, faithful Lover:
The Prince, whom I esteem; whom I lament;
And whom I fain would teach my Heart to love!

Orest. Ay, there it is!—I have but your Esteem,
While Pyrrhus has your Heart!

Her. Believe me, Prince,
Were you as Pyrrhus, I should hate you!

Orest. No!—
I should be blest! I should be lov'd as he is!—
Yet all this while I die by your Disdain;
While he neglects your Charms, and courts another.

Her. And who has told you, Prince, that I'm
neglected?

Has Pyrrhus said—(Oh, I shall go distracted!)
Has Pyrrhus told you so?—Or is it you,
Who think thus meanly of me?—Sir, perhaps,
All do not judge like you!

Orest. Madam, go on!—
Insult me still; I'm us'd to hear your Scorn.

Her.

The DISTREST MOTHER. 27

Her. Why am I told how Pyrrhus loves or hates?
—Go, Prince; and arm the Greeks against the Rebel;
Let them lay waste his Country; raze his Towns;
Destroy his Fleets; his Palaces;—Himself!—
Go, Prince; and tell me then how much I love him.

Orest. To hasten his Destruction; come yourself;
And work your Royal Father to his Ruin.

Her. Mean while he weds Andromache!

Orest. Ah, Princess!

What is't I hear?

Her. What infamy for Greece,
If he should wed a Phrygian, and a Captive!

Orest. Is this your Hatred, Madam?—'Tis in vain
To hide your Passion; ev'ry thing betrays it:
Your Looks, your Speech, your Anger, nay, your
Silence;

Your Love appears in all; your secret Flame
Breaks out the more, the more you would conceal it.

Her. Your Jealousy perverts my Meaning still;
And wrests each Circumstance to your Disquiet;
My very Hate is construed into Fondness.

Orest. Impute my Fears, if groundless, to my Love.

Her. Then hear me, Prince. Obedience to a Father
First brought me hither; and he same Obedience
Detains me here, 'till Pyrrhus drive me hence;
Or my offended Father shall recall me.

Tell this proud King, that Menelaus scorns
To match his Daughter with a Foe of Greece:
Bid him resign Aftyanax, or me.

If he persist to guard the hostile Boy,
Hermione embarks with you for Sparta.

S C E N E III.

O R E S T E S *alone.*

Then is Orestes blest! My Griets are fled!
Fled like a Dream!—Methinks I tread in Air!
Pyrrhus, enamour'd of his Captive Queen,
Will thank me, if I take her Rival hence:
He looks not on the Princess with my Eyes!
Surprizing Happiness!—unlook'd for Joy!
Never let Love despair!—The Prize is mine!
Be smooth, ye Seas; and, ye propitious Winds,
Breathe from Epirus to the Spartan Coasts!
I long to view the Sails unfurl'd—But, see!
Pyrrhus approaches in a happy Hour.

22 The DISTREST MOTHER.

S C E N E IV.

ORESTES, PYRRHUS, and PHOENIX.

Pyr. I was in Pain to find you, Prince. My warm
Ungovern'd Temper would not let me weigh
Th' Importance of your Embassy; and hear
You argue for my Good—I was to blame.
I since have pois'd your Reasons; and I thank
My good Allies: Their Care deserves my Thanks.
You have convinc'd me, that the Weal of Greece,
My Father's Honour, and my own Repose,
Demand, that Hector's Race should be destroy'd.
I shall deliver up Astyanax;
And you, yourself, shall bear the Victim hence.

Orest. If you approve it, Sir, and are content
To spill the Blood of a defenceless Child;
Th' offended Greeks, no doubt, will be appeas'd.

Pyr. Closer to strain the Knot of our Alliance,
I have determin'd to espouse Hermione.
You come in time to grace our Nuptial Rites:
In you the Kings of Greece will all be present;
And you have Right to personate her Father,
As his Ambassador, and Brother's Son.
Go, Prince, renew your Visit; tell Hermione,
To-morrow I receive her from your hands.

Orest. [*Aside.*] O change of Fortune! Oh undone
Orestes!

S C E N E V.

PYRRHUS and PHOENIX.

Pyr. Well, Phoenix! Am I still a Slave to Love?
What think'st thou now? Am I myself again?

Phæn. 'Tis as it should be; this discovers Pyrrhus;
Shews all the Hero: Now you are yourself!
The Son! the Rival of the great Achilles!
Greece will applaud you; and the World confess,
Pyrrhus has conquer'd Troy a second Time!

Pyr. Nay, Phoenix, now I but begin to triumph:
I never was a Conqueror 'till now!
Believe me, a whole Host, a War of Foes
May sooner be subdued than Love. O, Phoenix!
What Ruin have I shun'd! The Greeks, enrag'd,
Hung o'er me, like a gathering Storm, and soon
Had burst in Thunder on my head; while I
Abandon'd Duty, Empire, Honour, all,
To please a thankless Woman!—One kind Look
Had quite undone me!

Phæn.

The DISTREST MOTHER. 23

Phæn. O, my Royal Master!

The Gods, in Favour to you, made her cruel.

Pyr. Thou saw'st with how much Scorn she treat-
ed me!

When I permitted her to see her Son,
I hop'd it might have work'd her to my Wishes.
I went to see the mortal Interview,
And found her bath'd in Tears, and lost in Passion.
Wild with Distress, a thousand Times she call'd
On Hector's Name: And when I spoke in Comfort,
And promis'd my Protection to her Son;
She kiss'd the Boy, and call'd again on Hector:
Then strain'd him in her Arms; and cry'd, 'Tis he!
'Tis he himself! his Eyes, his ev'ry Feature!
His very Frown, and his stern Look already!
'Tis he! 'Tis my lov'd Lord, whom I embrace!
Does she then think, that I preserve the Boy,
To sooth and keep alive her Flame for Hector?

Phæn. No doubt she does; and thinks you favour'd
in it;

But let her go, for an ungrateful Woman!

Pyr. I know the Thoughts of her proud, stubborn
Heart:

Vain of her Charms, and insolent in Beauty,
She mocks my Rage; and when it threatens loudest,
Expects 'twill soon be humbled into Love.
But we shall change our Parts: and she shall find,
I can be deaf, like her; and steel my Heart!
She's Hector's Widow; I Achilles' Son.
Pyrrhus is born to hate Andromache.

Phæn. My Royal Master, talk of her no more;
I do not like this Anger. Your Hermione
Should now engross your Thoughts. 'Tis time to
see her.

'Tis time you should prepare the Nuptial Rites;
And not rely upon a Rival's Care:
It may be dangerous.

Pyr. But tell me, Phœnix;

Dost thou not think, the proud Andromache
Will be enrag'd, when I shall wed the Princess?

Phæn. Why does Andromache still haunt your
Thoughts?

What is't to you, be she enrag'd or pleas'd?

Let her Name perish: Think of her no more!

Pyr. No, Phœnix!—I have been too gentle with
her.

I've

24 The DISTREST MOTHER.

I've check'd my Wrath, and stifled my Resentments:
She knows not yet to what degree I hate her.

Let us return:—I'll brave her to her Face:

I'll give my Anger its free Course against her.

Thou shalt see, Phoenix, how I'll break her Pride!

Phæn. Oh, go not, Sir!—There's Ruin in her Eyes!

You do not know your Strength: You'll fall before her,
Adore her Beauty, and revive her Scorn.

Pyr. That were indeed a most unmanly Weakness!
Thou dost not know me, Phoenix!

Phæn. Ah, my Prince!

You still are struggling in the Toils of Love.

Pyr. Canst thou then think, I love this Woman still?
One who repays my Passion with Disdain!

A Stranger, Captive, friendless and forlorn;

She and her darling Son within my Power;

His Life a Forfeit to the Greeks: Yet I

Preserve her Son; would take her to my Throne;

Would fight her Battles, and avenge her Wrongs;

And all this while she treats me as her Foe!

Phæn. You have it in your Power to be reveng'd.

Pyr. Yes;—and I'll shew my Power! I'll give her
Cause

To hate me! her Aftyanax shall die—

What Tears will then be shed! How will she then

In Bitterness of Heart reproach my Name!

Then, to compleat her Woes, will I espouse

Hermione—'Twill stab her to the Heart.

Phæn. Alas! you threaten like a Lover still!

Pyr. Phoenix, excuse this Struggle of my Soul:
'Tis the last Effort of expiring Love.

Phæn. Then hasten, Sir, to see the Spartan Princess:
And turn the Bent of your Desires on her.

Pyr. Oh! 'tis a heavy Task to conquer Love,
And wean the Soul from her accusom'd Fondness.

But, come:—A long Farewell to Hector's Widow.

'Tis with a secret Pleasure I look back,

And see the many dangers I have pass'd:

The Merchant thus, in dreadful Tempests tost,

Thrown by the Waves on some unlook'd-for Coast;

Oft turns; and sees, with a delighted Eye,

'Midst Rocks and Shelves the broken Billows fly;

And, while th'-outrageous Winds the Deep deform,

Smiles on the Tumult, and enjoys the Storm.

A C T

+++++

ACT III. SCENE I.
PYLADES and ORESTES.

PYLADES.

FOR Heav'n's sake, Sir, compose your ruffled
Mind,

And moderate your Rage!

Orest. No, Pylades!

This is no time for Counsel.—I am deaf.

Talk not of Reason! I have been too patient.

Life is not worth my Care. My Soul grows desperate.

I'll bear her off; or perish in th' Attempt.

I'll force her from his Arms:—By Heav'n, I will!

Pyl. Well; 'tis agreed, my Friend;—We'll force
her hence,

But still consider we are in Epirus:

The Court, the Guards, Herminione herself,

The very Air we breathe, belongs to Pyrrhus.

Good Gods! what tempted you to seek her here?

Orest. Lost to myself, I knew not what I did!

My purposes were wild. Perhaps I came

To menace Pyrrhus; and upbraid the Woman.

Pyl. This Violence of Temper may prove fatal.

Orest. It must be more than man to bear these shocks,
These Outrages of Fate, with Temper!

He tells me that he weds Hermione;

And will to-morrow take her from my Hand!—

My Hand shall sooner tear the Tyrant's Heart—

Pyl. Your Passion blinds you, Sir; He's not to blame.

Could you but look into the Soul of Pyrrhus,

Perhaps you'd find it tortur'd, like your own.

Orest. No, Pylades! 'Tis all Design.—His Pride,

To triumph over me, has chang'd his Love.

The fair Hermione, before I came,

In all her Bloom of Beauty, was neglected.

Ah cruel Gods! I thought her all my own!

She was consenting to return to Sparta:

Her Heart, divided betwixt Rage and Love,

Was on the Wing to take its Leave of Pyrrhus.

She heard my Sighs; She pitied my Complaints;

She prais'd my Constancy;—The least Indifference

From this proud King, had made Orestes happy!

Pyl. So your fond Heart believes!—

Orest.

26 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Orest. Did I not see
Her Hate, her Rage, her Indignation rise
Against th' ungrateful Man?

Pyl. Believe me, Prince,
'Twas then she lov'd him most! Had Pyrrhus left her,
She would have form'd some new Pretext to stay.
Take my Advice:—Think not to force her hence;
But fly yourself from her destructive Charms.
Her Soul is link'd to Pyrrhus: Were she yours,
She would reproach you still, and still regret
Her disappointed Nuptials.—

Orest. Talk no more!
I cannot bear the Thought! She must be mine!
Did Pyrrhus carry Thunder in his Hand,
I'd stand the Bolt, and challenge all his Fury,
Ere I resign'd Hermione.—By Force
I'll snatch her hence, and bear her to my Ships!
Have we forgot her Mother Helen's Rape?

Pyr. Will then Orestes turn a Ravisher?
And blot his Embassy?

Orest. O, Pylades!
My Grief weighs heavy on me:—'Twill distract me!
O leave me to myself!—Let not thy Friendship
Involve thee in my woes. Too long already,
Too long hast thou been punish'd for my Crimes.
It is enough, my Friend!—It is enough!
Let not thy gen'rous Love betray thee farther.
The Gods have set me as their Mark, to empty
Their Quivers on me.—Leave me to myself.
Mine be the Danger; mine the Enterprize.
All I request of thee is, to return,
And in my Place convey Astryanax,
(As Pyrrhus has consented) into Greece.
Go, Pylades—

Pyl. Lead on, my Friend, lead on!
Let us bear off Hermione! No Toil,
No Danger can deter a Friend;—Lead on!
Draw up the Greeks: Summon your num'rous Train,
The Ships are ready, and the Wind sits fair:
There Eastward lies the Sea; the rolling Waves
Break on those Palace-stairs. I know each Pass,
Each Avenue and Outlet of the Court.
This very Night we'll carry her on Board.

Orest. Thou art too good!—I trespass on thy
Friendship:

But,

The DISTREST MOTHER. 27

But, oh excuse a Wretch, whom no Man pities,
Except thyself; one just about to lose
The Treasure of his Soul: Whom all Mankind
Conspire to hate, and one who hates himself.
When will my Friendship be of use to thee?

Pyl. The Question is unkind.—But now remember
To keep your Counsels close, and hide your Thoughts;
Let not Hermione suspect—No more—
I see her coming, Sir—

Orest. Away, my Friend;
I am advis'd; my all depends upon it.

SCENE II.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, and CLEONE.

Orest. Madam, your Orders are obey'd; I have seen
Pyrrhus, my Rival; and have gain'd him for you.
The King resolves to wed you.

Her. So I'm told;
And farther, I'm inform'd, that you, Orestes,
Are to dispose me for th' intended Marriage.

Orest. And are you, Madam, willing to comply?

Her. Could I imagine Pyrrhus lov'd me still?
After so long Delays, who would have thought
His hidden Flames would shew themselves at last,
And kindle in his Breast, when mine expir'd?
I can suppose, with you, he fears the Greeks;
That it is Interest, and not Love, directs him;
And that my Eyes had greater Power o'er you.

Orest. No, Princess, no! It is too plain he loves you.
Your Eyes do what they will; and cannot fail
To gain a Conquest, where you wish they should.

Her. What can I do, alas!—my Faith is promis'd;
Can I refuse what is not mine to give?
A Princess is not at her Choice to love;
All we have left us is a blind Obedience:
And yet, you see, how far I had complied,
And made my Duty yield to your Intreaties.

Orest. Ah, cruel Maid! you knew—but I have done.
All have a Right to please themselves in Love:
I blame you not: 'Tis true, I hop'd;—But you
Are Mistress of your Heart: And I'm content.
'Tis Fortune in mine Enemy; not you.
But, Madam, I shall spare you farther Pain
On this uneasy Theme; and take my leave.

28 The DISTREST MOTHER.

SCENE III.

HERMIONE and CLEONE.

Her. Cleone, could'st thou think he'd be so calm!

Cleo. Madam, his silent Grief sits heavy on him;
He is to be pitied: His too eager Love
Has made him busy to his own Destruction.
His Threats have wrought this Change of Mind in
Pyrrhus.

Her. Dost thou think Pyrrhus capable of Fear?
Whom should th' intrepid Pyrrhus fear? The Greeks?
Did he not lead their harra's'd Troops to Conquest,
When they despair'd; when they retir'd from Troy,
And sought for Shelter in their burning Fleets?
Did he not then supply his Father's Place?
No! my Cleone, he is above Constraint:
He acts unforc'd; and where he weds, he loves.

Cleo. Oh, that Orestes had remain'd in Greece!
I fear To-morrow will prove fatal to him.

Her. Wilt thou discourse of nothing but Orestes?
Pyrrhus is mine again!—Is mine for ever!
Oh my Cleone! I am wild with Joy!
Pyrrhus, the bold! the brave! the Godlike Pyrrhus!
—Oh, I could tell thee numberless Exploits,
And tire thee with his Battles!—Oh, Cleone—

Cleo. Madam, conceal your Joy; I see Andromache:
She weeps, and comes to speak her Sorrows to you.

Her. I would indulge the Gladness of my Heart!
Let us retire: Her Grief is out of Season.

SCENE IV.

ANDROMACHE, HERMIONE, CLEONE, & CEPHISA.

And. Ah, Madam! whither, whither do you fly?
Where can your Eyes behold a Sight more pleasing
'Than Hector's Widow suppliant and in Tears?
I come not an alarm'd, a jealous Foe,
To envy you the Heart your Charms have won:
The only Man I sought to please, is gone;
Kill'd in my Sight, by an inhuman Hand.
Hector first taught me Love; which my fond Heart
Shall ever cherish; till we meet in Death.
But, Oh, I have a Son!—And you, one Day,
Will be no stranger to a Mother's Fondness:
But Heav'n forbid, that you should ever know
A Mother's Sorrow for an only Son;
Her Joy, her Bliss, her last surviving Comfort!
When ev'ry Hour she trembles for his Life!

Your

The DISTREST MOTHER. 29

Your power o'er Pyrrhus may relieve my Fears.
 Alas, what Danger is there in a Child,
 Sav'd from the Wreck of a whole ruin'd Empire?
 Let me go hide him in some Desert Isle:
 You may rely upon my tender Care,
 To keep him from the Perils of Ambition:
 All, he can learn of me, will be to weep!

Her. Madam, 'tis easy to conceive your Grief:
 But it would ill become me, to solicit
 In Contradiction to my Father's Will:
 'Tis he who urges to destroy your Son.
 Madam, if Pyrrhus must be wrought to Pity,
 No Woman does it better than yourself;
 If you gain him, I shall comply of course.

S C E N E V.

ANDROMACHE, and CEPHISA.

Andr. Didst thou not mind, with what Disdain she
 spoke?

Youth and prosperity have made her vain!
 She has not seen the fickle Turns of Life.

Ceph. Madam, were I as you, I'd take her Counsel;
 I'd speak my own Distress; one Look from you
 Will vanquish Pyrrhus, and confound the Greeks—
 See, where he comes—Lay hold on this Occasion.

S C E N E VI.

PYRRHUS, ANDROMACHE, PHOENIX, and
 CEPHISA.

Pyr. Where is the Princess?—Did you not in-
 form me

Hermione was here? [To Phoenix.

Phæn. I thought so, Sir.

Andr. Thou seest, what mighty power my Eyes
 have on him! [To Cephisa.

Pyr. What says she, Phoenix?

Andr. I have no hope left!

Phæn. Let us be gone:—Hermione expects you.

Ceph. For Heav'n's sake, Madam, break this sul-
 len Silence.

Andr. My Child's already promis'd!—

Ceph. But not given.

Andr. No! no!—my Tears are vain! His Doom
 is fixt!

Pyr. See, if she deigns to cast one Look upon us!
 Proud Woman!

Andr. I provoke him by my presence.
 Let us retire.

30 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Pyr. Come, let us satisfy
The Greeks; and give them up this Phrygian Boy.

Andr. Ah, Sir, recall those Words—What have
you said!

If you give up my Son, Oh give up me!—
You, who so many times have sworn me Friendship!
Oh Heav'ns!—will you not look with pity on me?
Is there no Hope? Is there no room for pardon?

Pyr. Phoenix will answer you: My Word is past.

Andr. You, who would brave so many dangers
for me!

Pyr. I was your Lover then:—I now am free.
To favour you, I might have spar'd his Life:
But you would ne'er vouchsafe to ask it of me.
Now 'tis too late.

Andr. Ah, Sir, you understood
My Tears, my Wishes, which I durst not utter,
Afraid of a Repulse. Oh, Sir, excuse
The pride of Royal Blood, that checks my Soul,
And knows not how to be importunate.
You know, alas! I was not born to kneel,
To sue for pity, and to own a Master.

Pyr. No! in your Heart you curse me! you disdain
My gen'rous Flame, and scorn to be oblig'd!
This very Son, this Darling of your Soul,
Would be less dear, did I preserve him for you.
Your Anger, your Aversion, fall on me;
You hate me more than the whole League of Greece:
But, I shall leave you to your great Resentments.
Let us go, Phoenix, and appease the Greeks.

Andr. Then let me die! and let me go to Hector!

Ceph. But, Madam—

Andr. What can I do more? the Tyrant
Sees my distraction, and insults my tears. [*To Cephisa.*
—Behold how low you have reduc'd a Queen!
These Eyes have seen my Country lain in Ashes;
My Kindred fall in War; my Father slain;
My Husband dragg'd in his own Blood; my Son
Condemn'd to Bondage, and myself a Slave;
Yet, in the midst of these unheard-of Woes,
'Twas some Relief to find myself your Captive;
And that my Son, deriv'd from ancient Kings,
Since he must serve, had Pyrrhus for his Master.
When Priam kneel'd, e'en great Achilles wept:
I hop'd I should not find his Son less noble:

I thought

The DISTREST MOTHER. 31

I thought the Brave were still the most compassionate.
Oh, do not, Sir, divide me from my Child!—
If he must die—

Pyr. Phoenix, withdraw a while.

S C E N E VII.

PYRRHUS and ANDROMACHE.

Pyr. Rise, Madam—Yet you may preserve your Son.
I find, whenever I provoke your Tears,
I furnish you with Arms against myself.
I thought my Hatred fixt, before I saw you.
Oh, turn your Eyes upon me, while I speak!
And see if you discover in my Looks
An angry Judge, or an obdurate Foe.
Why will you force me to desert your Cause?
In your Son's Name I beg we may be Friends;
Let me entreat you to secure his Life!
Must I turn Suppliant for him? Think, Oh think,
(Tis the last Time) you both may yet be happy
I know the Ties I break; the Foes I arm;
I wrong Hermione; I send her hence;
And with her Diadem I bind your Brows.
Consider well; for 'tis of moment to you!
Choose to be wretched, Madam, or a Queen.
My Soul, consum'd with a whole year's despair,
Can bear no longer these perplexing doubts:
Enough of Sighs and Tears, and threats I've try'd.
I know, if I'm depriv'd of you, I die:
But Oh, I die, if I wait longer for you!
I leave you to your Thoughts. When I return,
We'll to the Temple: There you'll find your Son;
And there be crown'd, or give him up for ever.

S C E N E VIII.

ANDROMACHE and CEPHISA.

Ceph. I told you, Madam, that, in spite of Greece,
You would o'er-rule the Malice of your Fortune.

Andr. Alas! Cephisa, what have I obtain'd!
Only a poor, short Respite for my Son.

Ceph. You have enough approv'd your faith to Hector:
To be reluctant still would be a crime.
He wou'd himself persuade you to comply.

Andr. How!—wouldst thou give me Pyrrhus for
a Husband?

Ceph. Think you 'twill please the Ghost of your
dead Husband,
That you should sacrifice his Son? consider,

32 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Pyrrhus once more invites you to a Throne;
Turns all his Power against the Foes of Troy;
Remembers not Achilles was his father;
Retracts his Conquests, and forgets his Hatred.

Andr. But how can I forget it! How can I
Forget my Hector, treated with dishonour;
Depriv'd of Fun'ral Rites; and vilely dragg'd,
A bloody Corse, about the Walls of Troy!
Can I forget the good old King his Father,
Slain in my Presence; at the Altar slain!
Which vainly, for Protection, he embrac'd.
Hast thou forgot that dreadful Night, Cephisa,
When a whole People fell! Methinks I see
Pyrrhus, enrag'd and breathing Vengeance, enter
Amidst the Glare of burning Palaces:
I see him hew his passage through my Brothers;
And, bath'd in Blood, lay all my kindred waste.
Think, in this scene of Horror, what I suffer'd!
This is the Courtship I receiv'd from Pyrrhus:
And this the Husband thou wou'd'st give me! No,
We both will perish first! I'll ne'er consent.

Ceph. Since you resolve Aftyanax shall die,
Haste to the Temple, bid your Son farewell.
Why do you tremble, Madam?

Andr. O Cephisa!
Thou hast awaken'd all the Mother in me.
How can I bid farewell to the dear Child,
The pledge, the image of my much-lov'd Lord!
Alas, I call to mind the fatal Day,
When his too forward Courage led him forth
To seek Achilles.

Ceph. Oh, th' unhappy Hour!
'Twas then Troy fell, and all her Gods forsook her.

Andr. That Morn, Cephisa! that ill-fated Morn,
My Husband bid thee bring Aftyanax;
He took him in his Arms; and, as I wept,
My Wife, my dear Andromache, said he,
(Heaving with stifled Sighs to see me weep)
What Fortune may attend my Arms, the Gods
Alone can tell. To thee I give the Boy;
Preserve him as the Token of our Loves;
If I should fall, let him not miss his Sire
While thou surviv'st; but by thy tender Care
Let the Son see, that thou didst love his Father.

Ceph. And will you throw away a Life so precious?
At once extirpate all the Trojan line?

Andr.

THE DISTREST MOTHER. 33

Andr. Inhuman King! What has he done to suffer?
If I neglect your Vows, is he to blame?
Has he reproach'd you with his slaughter'd Kindred?
Can he resent those Ills he does not know?—
But Oh! while I deliberate, he dies.
No, no, thou must not die, while I can save thee:
Oh! let me find out Pyrrhus—Oh Cephisa!
Do thou go find him.

Ceph. What must I say to him?

Andr. Tell him I love my Son to such Excess—
But dost thou think he means the Child shall die?
Can Love rejected turn to so much Rage?

Ceph. Madam, he'll soon be here—Resolve on something.

Andr. Well then, assure him—

Ceph. Madam, of your Love?

Andr. Alas, thou know'st that is not in my power.
Oh my dead Lord! Oh Priam's Royal House!
Oh my Astyanax! at what a price
Thy Mother buys thee!—Let us go.

Ceph. But whither?

And what does your unsettled Heart resolve?

Andr. Come, my Cephisa, let us go together
To the sad Monument, which I have rais'd
To Hector's Shade; where in their sacred Urn
The Ashes of a Hero lie inclos'd,
The dear Remains, which I have sav'd from Troy;
There let me weep, there summon to my Aid,
With pious Rites, my Hector's awful Shade;
Let him be witness to my Doubts, my Fears;
My agonizing Heart, my flowing Tears:
Oh! may he rise in Pity from his Tomb,
And fix his wretched Son's uncertain Doom.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ANDROMACHE, CEPHISA.

CEPHISA.

BLEST be the Tomb of Hector, that inspires
These pious Thoughts: Or is it Hector's Self,
That prompts you to preserve your Son! 'Tis he
Who still presides o'er ruin'd Troy; 'tis he
Who urges Pyrrhus to restore Astyanax.

Andr.

34 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Andr. Pyrrhus has said he will; and thou hast heard him

Just now renew the oft-repeated promise.

Ceph. Already, in the transports of his Heart,
He gives you up his Kingdom, his Allies,
And thinks himself o'erpaid for all in you.

Andr. I think I may rely upon his promise:
And yet my Heart is overcharg'd with Grief.

Ceph. Why should you grieve? you see he bids defiance
To all the Greeks; And, to protect your Son
Against their Rage, has plac'd his Guards about him;
Leaving himself defenceless for his sake:

But, Madam, think the Coronation Pomp
Will soon demand your presence in the Temple:
'Tis time to lay aside these Mourning Weeds.

Andr. I will be there; but first would see my Son.

Ceph. Madam, you need not now be anxious for him,
He will be always with you, all your own,
To lavish the whole Mother's Fondness on him.

What a Delight to train beneath your Eye
A Son, who grows no longer up in Bondage;
A Son, in whom a Race of Kings revives!
But, Madam, you are sad, and wrapt in Thought,
As if you relish'd not your Happiness.

Andr. Oh! I must see my Son once more, Cephisa!

Ceph. Madam, he will be no more a Captive;
Your Visits may be frequent as you please.
To-morrow you may pass the live-long Day—

Andr. To-morrow! Oh Cephisa!—But, no more!
Cephisa, I have always found thee faithful:

A load of Care weighs down my drooping Heart.

Ceph. Oh! that 'twere possible for me to ease you.

Andr. I soon shall exercise thy long-try'd Faith.—
Mean while I do conjure thee, my Cephisa,
Thou take no notice of my present Trouble:
And, when I shall disclose my secret purpose,
That thou be punctual to perform my will.

Ceph. Madam, I have no Will but yours. My Life
Is nothing, balanc'd with my Love to you.

Andr. I thank thee, good Cephisa; my Astyanax
Will recompense thy Friendship to his Mother.
But, come; my Heart's at ease: Assist me now
To change this sable Habit.—Yonder comes
Hermione: I would not meet her Rage.

SCENE

S C E N E II.

HERMIONE and CLEONE.

Cleo. This unexpected Silence, this Reserve,
This outward Calm, this settled Frame of Mind,
After such Wrongs and Insults, much surprise me!
You, who before could not command your Rage,
When Pyrrhus look'd but kindly on his Captive;
How can you bear unmov'd, that he should wed her,
And seat her on a Throne which you should fill!
I fear this dreadful Stillness in your Soul!

'Twere better, Madam—

Her. Have you call'd Orestes?

Cleo. Madam, I have. His Love is too impatient,
Not to obey with Speed the welcome Summons.
His love-sick Heart o'erlooks his unkind Usage:
His Ardour's still the same—Madam, he's here.

S C E N E III.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, CLEONE.

Orest. Ah, Madam, is it true? does then Orestes
At length attend you by your own Commands?
What can I do—

Her. Orestes, do you love me?

Orest. What means that Question, Princess? Do I
love you?

My Oaths, my Perjuries, my Hopes, my Fears,
My Farewel, my Return, all speak my Love.

Her. Avenge my Wrongs, and I believe them all.

Orest. It shall be done—my Soul has catch'd th'
Alarm.

We'll spirit up the Greeks—I'll lead them on:
Your Cause shall animate our Fleets and Armies.
Let us return: Let us not lose a Moment,
But urge the Fate of this devoted Land:
Let us depart.

Her. No, Prince, let us stay here!
I will have Vengeance here—I will not carry
This Load of Infamy to Greece; nor trust
The Chance of War to vindicate my Wrongs.
Ere I depart I'll make Epirus mourn.
If you avenge me, let it be this Instant;
My Rage brooks no Delay—haste to the Temple,
Haste, Prince, and sacrifice him.

Orest. Whom?

Her. Why Pyrrhus.

Orest. Pyrrhus! Did you say, Pyrrhus!

Her.

Her. You demur!

Oh fly, be gone! give me no Time to think!
Talk not of Laws—he tramples on all Laws—
Let me not hear him justify'd—away.

Orest. You cannot think I'll justify my Rival.
Madam, your Love has made him criminal.
You shall have Vengeance; I'll have Vengeance too;
But let our Hatred be profest and open:
Let us alarm all Greece, denounce a War;
Let us attack him in his Strength, and hunt him down
By Conquest: Should I turn a base Assassin,
'T would sully all the Kings I represent.

Her. Have not I been dishonour'd? set at nought?
Expos'd to public Scorn?—And will you suffer
The Tyrant, who dares use me thus, to live?
Know, Prince, I hate him more than once I lov'd him—
The Gods alone could tell how once I lov'd him;
Yes, the false perjurd Man, I once did love him;
And spite of all his Crimes, and broken Vows,
If he should live, I may relapse—who knows
But I to-morrow may forgive his Wrongs?

Orest. First let me tear him piece-meal—he shall die.
But, Madam, give me Leisure to contrive
The Place, the Time, the Manner of his Death;
Yet I'm a Stranger in the Court of Pyrrhus;
Scarce have I set my Foot within Epirus,
When you enjoin me to destroy the Prince.
It shall be done this very Night.

Her. But now,
This very Hour he weds Andromache;
The Temple shines with Pomp; The Golden Throne
Is now prepar'd; the joyful Kites begin;
My Shame is public—Oh be speedy, Prince!
My Wrath's impatient—Pyrrhus lives too long!
Intent on Love, and heedless of his Person,
He covers with his Guards the Trojan Boy.
Now is the Time, assemble all your Greeks:
Mine shall assist them; let their Fury loose:
Already they regard him as a Foe.
Be gone, Orestes—kill the faithless Tyrant:
My Love shall recompence the glorious Deed.

Orest. Consider, Madam—

Her. You but mock my Rage!
I was contriving how to make you happy.
Think you to merit by your idle Sighs;

And

And not attest your Love by one brave Action?
Go, with your boasted Constancy! and leave
Hermione to execute her own Revenge!
I blush to think how my too easy Faith
Has twice been baffled in one shameful Hour!

Orest. Hear me but speak!—you know I'll die to
serve you!

Her. I'll go myself: I'll stab him at the Altar;
Then drive the Poignard, reeking with his Blood,
Through my own Heart. In Death we shall unite:
Better to die with him, than live with you!

Orest. That were to make him blest; and me more
wretched:

Madam, he dies by me:—Have you a Foe,
And shall I let him live? My Rival too?
Ere yon Meridian Sun declines, he dies:
And you shall say, that I deserve your Love.

Her. Go, Prince; strike home; and leave the rest
to me:

Let all your Ships stand ready for our Flight.

SCENE IV.

HERMIONE, CLEONE.

Cleo. Madam, you'll perish in this bold Attempt.

Her. Give me my Vengeance, I'm content to perish.
I was to blame to trust it with another:
In my own Hands it had been more secure.
Orestes hates not Pyrrhus, as I hate him:
I should have thrust the Dagger home, have seen
The Tyrant curse me with his parting Breath,
And roll about his dying Eyes, in vain,
To find Andromache, whom I would hide.
Oh, would Orestes, when he gives the Blow,
Tell him he dies my Victim!—Haste, Cleone;
Charge him to say, Hermione's Resentments,
Not those of Greece, have sentenc'd him to Death.
Haste, my Cleone! My Revenge is lost,
If Pyrrhus knows not that he dies by me!

Cleo. I shall obey your Orders—But I see
The King approach!—Who could expect him here!

Her. O fly! Cleone, fly! and bid Orestes
Not to proceed a Step before I see him.

SCENE V.

HERMIONE, PYRRHUS.

Pyr. Madam, I ought to shun an injur'd Princess:
Your distant Looks reproach me: and I come

Not

38 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Not to defend, but to avow my Guilt.
 Pyrrhus will ne'er approve his own Injustice;
 Nor form Excuses, while his Heart condemns him.
 I might perhaps alledge, our warlike Sires,
 Unknown to us, engag'd us to each other;
 And join'd our Hearts by Contract, not by Love;
 But I detest such Cobweb Arts; I own
 My Father's Treaty, and allow its Force.
 I sent Ambassadors to call you hither;
 Receiv'd you as my Queen; and hop'd my Oaths,
 So oft renew'd, might ripen into Love.
 The Gods can witness, Madam, how I fought
 Against Andromache's too fatal Charms!
 And still I wish I had the power to leave
 This Trojan Beauty, and be just to you.
 Discharge your Anger on this perjur'd Man!
 For I abhor my Crime! and should be pleas'd
 To hear you speak your Wrongs aloud: No Terms,
 No Bitterness of Wrath, nor keen Re-roach,
 Will equal half th' upbraidings of my Heart.

Her. I find, Sir, you can be sincere: You scorn
 To act your Crimes with Fear, like other Men.
 A Hero should be bold; above all Laws;
 Be bravely false; and laugh at solemn Ties.
 To be perfidious shews a daring Mind!
 And you have nobly triumph'd o'er a Maid!
 To court me; to reject me; to return;
 Then to forsake me for a Phrygian Slave;
 To lay proud Troy in Ashes; then to raise
 The Son of Hector, and renounce the Greeks;
 Are Actions worthy the great Soul of Pyrrhus.

Pyr. Madam, go on: Give your Resentments Birth;
 And pour forth all your Indignation on me.

Her. 'Twould please your Queen, should I upbraid
 your Falshood;
 Call you perfidious, Traitor, all the Names
 That injur'd Virgins lavish on your Sex;
 I should o'erflow with Tears, and die with Grief,
 And furnish out a Tale to sooth her Pride;
 But, Sir, I would not over-charge her Joys.
 If you would charm Andromache, recount
 Your bloody Battles, your Exploits, your Slaughters,
 Your great Achievements in her Father's Palace.
 She needs must love the Man, who fought so bravely,
 And in her Sight slew half her Royal Kindred.

Pyr.

The DISTREST MOTHER. 39

Pyr. With Horror I look back on my past Deeds!
I punish'd Helen's Wrongs too far; I shed
Too much of Blood: But, Madam, Helen's Daughter
Should not object those Ills the Mother caus'd.
However, I am pleas'd to find you hate me:
I was too forward to accuse myself:
The Man who ne'er was lov'd can ne'er be false.
Obedience to a Father brought you hither;
And I stood bound by Promise to receive you:
But our Desires were different Ways inclin'd;
And you, I own, were not oblig'd to love me.

Her. Have I not lov'd you then? perfidious Man!
For you I slighted all the Grecian Princes;
Forsook my Father's House; conceal'd my Wrongs,
When most provok'd; would not return to Sparta,
In hopes that Time might fix your wavering Heart.
I lov'd you when inconstant: and ev'n now,
Inhuman King, that you pronounce my Death,
My Heart still doubts, if I should love, or hate you;
But, Oh, since you resolve to wed another,
Defer your cruel Purpose till To-morrow!
That I may not be here to grace her Triumph!
This is the last Request I e'er shall make you.—
See if the barb'rous Prince vouchsafes an Answer!
Go, then, to the lov'd Phrygian; hence! be gone!
And bear to her those Vows, that once were mine:
Go in Defiance to th' avenging Gods!
Be gone! The Priest expects you at the Altar——
But, Tyrant, have a Care I come not thither.

S C E N E VI.

PYRRHUS, PHOENIX.

Phæn. Sir, did you mind her Threats? your Life's
in Danger:

There is no trifling with a Woman's Rage.
The Greeks, that swarm about the Court, all hate you;
Will treat you as their Country's Enemy,
And join in her Revenge; Besides, Orestes
Still loves her to Distraction: Sir, I beg——

Pyr. How! Phoenix! —Should I fear a Woman's
Threats?

A nobler Passion takes up all my Thoughts:
I must prepare to meet Andromache.
Do thou place all my Guards about her Son:
If he be safe, Pyrrhus is free from Fear.

D

SCENE

40 The DISTREST MOTHER.

S C E N E VII.

PHOENIX, *alone.*

Oh Pyrrhus! oh, what Pity 'tis the Gods,
Who fill'd thy Soul with every kingly Virtue,
Form'd thee for Empire and consummate Greatness,
Should leave thee so expos'd to wild Desires,
That hurry thee beyond the Bounds of Reason!
Such was Achilles: Gen'rous, fierce, and brave;
Open, and undesigning: But impatient,
Undisciplin'd, and not to be controul'd.
I fear this Whirl of Passion, this Career!
That over-bears Reflection and cool Thought
I tremble for th' Event!—But see, the Queen,
Magnificent in royal Pride, appears.
I must obey, and guard her Son from Danger.

S C E N E VIII.

ANDROMACHE, CEPHISA.

Ceph. Madam, once more you look and move a Queen!
Your Sorrows are dispers'd, your Charms revive,
And every faded Beauty blooms anew.

Andr. Yet all is not as I could wish, Cephisa.

Ceph. You see the King is watchful o'er your Son;
Decks him with princely Robes, with Guards surrounds
him.

Astyanax begins to reign already.

Andr. Pyrrhus is nobly minded: And I fain
Would live to thank him for Astyanax:
'Tis a vain Thought—However, since my Child
Has such a Friend, I ought not to repine.

Ceph. These dark Unfoldings of your Soul perplex me:
What meant that Flood of Tears, those warm Em-
As if you bid your Son Adieu for ever: [braces,
For Heav'n's Sake, Madam, let me know your Griefs!
If you distrust my Faith—

Andr. That were to wrong thee.

Oh, my Cephisa! This gay borrow'd Air,
This Blaze of Jewels, and this bridal Dress,
Are but mock-trappings to conceal my Woe:
My Heart still mourns; I still am Hector's Widow.

Ceph. Will you then break the Promise given to
Pyrrhus?

Blow up his Rage afresh, and blast your Hopes?

Andr. I thought, Cephisa, thou hadst known thy
Mistress.

Could'st

The DISTREST MOTHER. 41

Could'st thou believe I would be false to Hector?
Fall off from such a Husband! Break his Rest,
And call him to this hated Light again,
To see Andromache in Pyrrhus' Arms!
Would Hector, were he living, and I dead,
Forget Andromache, and wed her Foes?

Ceph. I cannot guess what Drift your Thoughts
pursue:

But, Oh, I fear there's something dreadful in it!
Must then Aftyanax be doom'd to die;
And you to linger out a Life in Bondage?

Andr. Nor this, nor that, Cephisa, will I bear;
My Word is past to Pyrrhus, his to me;
And I rely upon his promis'd Faith.
Unequal as he is, I know him well:
Pyrrhus is violent; but he's sincere,
And will perform beyond what he has sworn.
The Greeks will but incense him more; their Rage
Will make him cherish Hector's Son.

Ceph. Ah, Madam!

Explain these Riddles to my boding Heart?

Andr. Thou may'st remember, for thou oft hast
heard me

Relate the dreadful Vision, which I saw,
When first I landed Captive in Epirus.
That very Night, as in a Dream I lay,
A ghastly Figure full of gaping Wounds,
His Eyes a-glare, his Hair all stiff with Blood,
Full in my Sight thrice shook his Head and groan'd.
I soon discern'd my slaughter'd Hector's Shade;
But, Oh, how chang'd! Ye Gods, how much unlike
The living Hector!—Loud he bid me fly!
Fly from Achilles' Son! then sternly frown'd,
And disappear'd: Struck with the dreadful Sound,
I started and awak'd.

Ceph. But did he bid you
Destroy Aftyanax?

Andr. Cephisa, I'll preserve him.
With my own Life, Cephisa, I'll preserve him.

Ceph. What may these Words, so full of Horror,
mean?

Andr. Know then the secret purpose of my Soul:
Andromache will not be false to Pyrrhus;
Nor violate her sacred Love to Hector.
This Hour I'll meet the King; the holy Priest

42 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Shall join us, and confirm our mutual Vows.

This will secure a Father to my Child.

That done, I have no farther use for Life :

This pointed Dagger, this determin'd Hand,

Shall save my Virtue, and conclude my Woes.

Ceph. Ah, Madam! Recollect your scatter'd Reason!

This fell Despair ill suits your present Fortunes.

Andr. No other Stratagem can serve my Purpose :

This is the sole Expedient, to be just

To Hector, to Aftyanax, to Pyrrhus.

I soon shall visit Hector, and the Shades

Of my great Ancestors—Cephisa, thou

Wilt lend a Hand to close thy Mistress' Eyes.

Ceph. Oh, never think that I will stay behind you!

Andr. No, my Cephisa; I must have thee live.

Remember, thou didst promise to obey,

And to be secret: Wilt thou now betray me?

After thy long, thy faithful Service, wilt thou

Refuse my last Commands, my dying Wish?

Once more I do conjure thee, live for me! [gone.

Ceph. Life is not worth my Care, when you are

Andr. I must commit into thy faithful Hands,

All that is dear and precious to my Soul :

Live and supply my Absence to my Child.

All that remains of Troy; a future Progeny

Of Heroes; and a distant Line of Kings,

In him, is all intrusted to thy Care.

Ceph. But, Madam, what will be the Rage of Pyrrhus,
Defrauded of his promis'd Happiness?

Andr. That will require thy utmost skill: Observe

The first impetuous Onsets of his Grief:

Use ev'ry Artifice to keep him stedfast.

Sometimes with Tears thou may'st discourse of me:

Speak of our Marriage: Let him think I lov'd him:

Tell him my Soul repos'd itself on him,

When I resign'd myself to his Protection.

Ceph. O for a Spirit to support my Grief!

Is there ought more before you go for ever?

Andr. Oh, my Cephisa! my swell'n Heart is full!

I have a thousand farewells to my Son:—

But Tears break in—Grief interrupts my Speech—

My Soul o'erflows in Fondness!—Let him know

I dy'd to save him:—And would die again.

Season his Mind with early Hints of Glory:

Make him acquainted with his Ancestors;

Trace

Trace out their shining Story in his thoughts :
Dwell on th' Exploits of his immortal Father :
And sometimes let him hear his Mother's Name.
Let him reflect upon his Royal Birth
With modest Pride : Pyrrhus will prove a Friend :
But let him know, he has a Conqueror's Right.
He must be taught to stifle his Resentments,
And sacrifice his Vengeance to his Safety :
Should he prove headstrong, rash, or unadvis'd,
He then will frustrate all his Mother's Virtue ;
Provoke his Fate ; and I shall die in vain.

Ceph. Alas, I fear, I never shall out-live you !

Andr. No more !—Thy Tears, Cephisa, will betray me :
Assume a chearful Look : But still remember—

[*Flourish within.*]

Hark, how the Trumpet, with its sprightly Notes,
Proclaims th' appointed Hour, and calls us hence :
Hector, I come, once more a Queen, to join thee !
Thus the gay Victim, with fresh Garlands crown'd,
Pleas'd with the sacred Fife's enlivening Sound,
Through gazing Crouds, in solemn State, proceeds :
And, dress'd in fatal Pomp, magnificently bleeds.

ACT V. SCENE I.

HERMIONE alone.

WHAT have I done ? Where am I ? Where is
Pyrrhus ?

Ye Gods ! what mean these Horrors ?—I'm undone !
My Soul is on the Rack !—I cannot bear it—
Why do I wander like some guilty Ghost ?
What brought me to this Place ? What keeps me here ?
The Court of Pyrrhus has no room for me !
Do I still doubt if I should love or hate him ?
Hard hearted Man ! how unconcern'd he left me !
Did he once sigh ? bestow one pitying Look ?
Once shed a Tear ? or speak one soft kind Word ?
Did he so much as feign one Moment's Sorrow,
To calm my Grievs, and mitigate his Falshood ?
—Why am I still thus anxious for his Life ?
Why do I start at his impending Fate ?
Shall he then live ; shall the base Traitor live
To laugh at my Distress ? No, let him perish !
Be quick, Orestes !—Execute my Orders !

44 THE DISTREST MOTHER.

Alas! my Orders? Oh, preposterous Guilt!
 Can I decree the Death of him I love?
 Was it for this my Soul delighted in him?
 Was it for this I left my Father's Court?
 Have I then cross'd so many Realms and Seas,
 To murder Pyrrhus?

SCENE II.

HERMIONE, CLEONE.

Her. Oh, Cleone, help me!

What have I done! Is Pyrrhus yet alive?
 What say'st thou—Answer me! where is the King?

Cleo. Madam, I saw the cruel Prince set forward,
 Triumphant in his Looks, and full of Joy.
 Still, as he walk'd, his ravish'd Eyes were fixt
 On the fair Captive; while through shouting Crouds
 She pass'd along with a dejected Air,
 And seem'd to mourn her Hector to the last.

Her. Insulting Tyrant! I shall burst with Rage!—
 But, say, Cleone, didst thou mark him well?
 Was his Brow smooth? Say, did there not appear
 Some shade of Grief? Some little Cloud of Sorrow?
 Did he not stop? Did he not once look back?
 Didst thou approach him? Was he not confounded?
 Did he not—Oh, be quick, and tell me all!

Cleo. Madam, the Tumult of his Joy admits
 No Thought, but Love. Unguarded he march'd on
 'Midst a promiscuous Throng of Friends and Foes.
 His Cares all turn upon Astyanax,
 Whom he has lodg'd within the Citadel,
 Defended by the Strength of all his Guards.

Her. Enough!—he dies!—the Traitor!—Where's
 Orestes?

Cleo. He's in the Temple, with his whole Retinue.

Her. Is he still resolute? Is he determin'd?

Cleo. Madam, I fear—

Her. How!—Is Orestes false?

Does he betray me too?

Cleo. A thousand Doubts

Perplex his Soul, and wound him with Remorse;
 His Virtue and his Love prevail by Turns.
 He told me Pyrrhus should not fall ignobly;
 Pyrrhus, the warlike Son of great Achilles:
 He dreads the Censure of the Grecian States;
 Of all Mankind; and fears to stain his Honour.

Her. Poor, tim'rous Wretch! 'tis false! he basely
 fears

To

* THE DISTREST MOTHER. 45

To cope with Dangers, and encounter Death:
'Tis that he fears!—Am I bright Helen's Daughter?
To vindicate her Wrongs all Greece conspir'd;
For her confed'rate Nations fought, and Kings were
slain;

Troy was o'erthrown, and a whole Empire fell.
My eyes want force to raise a Lover's Arm
Against a Tyrant, that has dar'd to wrong me!

Cleo. Madam, like Helen, trust your Cause to Greece.

Her. No; I'll avenge myself! I'll to the Temple;
I'll overturn the Altar, stab the Priest:

I'll hurl Destruction, like a Whirlwind, round me!
They must not wed! they must not live! they shall not!

Let me be gone! I have no Time to lose!

Stand off! hold me not! I am all Distraction!

Oh Pyrrhus, Tyrant, Traytor! Thou shalt bleed.

S C E N E III.

HERMIONE, CLEONE, ORESTES.

Orest. Madam, 'tis done: Your Orders are obey'd:
The Tyrant lies expiring at the Altar.

Her. Is Pyrrhus slain?

Orest. Even now he gasps in Death.

Our Greeks, all undistinguish'd in the Crowd,
Flock'd to the Temple, and dispers'd themselves
On ev'ry side the Altar: I was there:

Pyrrhus observ'd me, with a haughty Eye;

And proud to triumph over Greece in me,

From his own Brows he took the Diadem,

And bound it on the Temples of his Captive.

Receive, said he, my Crown; receive my Faith;

Mine and my People's Sovereign reign for ever.

From this blest Hour, a Father to your Son,

I'll scourge his Foes: Henceforward be he stil'd

The Trojan King: I swear it at the Altar;

And call the Gods to ratify my Vows.

His Subjects with loud Acclamations shook

The spacious Dome! our Greeks, enrag'd, cry'd out
Revenge! Revenge! broke thro' the thronging Press;

And rush'd tumultuously on the unguarded King.

Their eager Fury left no Work for me.

Pyrrhus a while oppos'd their clashing Swords,

And dealt his fatal Blows on ev'ry Side,

With manly fierceness; till oppress'd by Numbers,

Streaming with Blood, all over gasp'd with Wounds,

He reel'd, he groan'd, and at the Altar fell.

Haste,

46 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Haste, Madam; let us fly! Haste to our Ships!
They lie unmoor'd: Our Friends attend us there.

Her. What have they done!

Orest. Madam, forgive their Rage.

I own your Vengeance had been more compleat,
Had Pyrrhus fall'n by me; and had he known,
Hermione chastis'd him by my Arm.

Her. Peace, Monster, Peace!—Go tell thy hor-
rid Tale

To Savages, and howl it out in Desarts.

Would'st thou impute to me thy barb'rous Guilt?
Me would'st thou make th' Accomplice of thy Crimes?
Hence, to thy Greeks! and boast thy foul exploits!
My Soul abhors them! I disclaim the Deed.

Be gone! I know thee not! Thou fell Barbarian!
What had he done? What could provoke thy Madnefs
To assassinate so great, so brave a Man?

Who set thee on?

Orest. O, grant me Patience, Heaven!

With your own Lips did you not curse the Tyrant,
Pronounce his Death, and urge me to destroy him?

Her. What if, transported by my boundless Passion,
I could not bear to see him wed another?

Were you to obey a jealous Woman's Phrenzy?
You should have div'd into my inmost Thoughts:
My Heart, tho' full of Rage, was free from Malice;
And all my Anger was excess of Love.

Why did you take me at my Word? You saw
The struggles of my Soul; you heard me rave;
You should have question'd me a thousand Times;
Yet still have doubted, and still question'd on,
Before you ventur'd on a Life so precious.

Orest. Hear me but speak:—Heaven knows, against
my Will—

Her. Why did you not return? Why not consult me
A second Time? And, undetermin'd still,
Again return, and still find new Delays?

What had your rash officious Greeks, dire Blood-
Hounds,

To do with my Revenge? What drew you hither,
To bring on me the vengeful Woes that haunt you?
Are these the Fruits of your detested Love?

Your fatal Embassy, your hateful Presence
Drove Pyrrhus to my Rival: and destroys
Both him and me.—He might have lov'd me still,

Had

The DISTREST MOTHER. 47

Had you ne'er interpos'd.—Avaunt! Be gone!
And leave me in Epirus—I renounce
My Friends, my Country, Greece, and all Mankind:
But chiefly I renounce Thee! Monster, Thee!

S C E N E IV.

O R E S T E S.

Am I awake! Where am I! Soft, my Soul:
Be not too rash.—Was that Hermione?
Why should her Anger thunder against me?
Was not this Blood shed all by her command?—
I am indeed an outrageous Monster!
A Ruthan, Murderer, a base Assassin!
And all to please a false, ungrateful Woman.
Henceforward let the Laws of Nations cease;
And let the Pale, that severs Right and Wrong,
Things sacred and profane, be broken down;
Gods in their Temples, Kings upon their Thrones,
Are not in Safety, while Orestes lives.
Oh, never more shall my torn Mind be heal'd,
Nor taste the gentle Comforts of Repose!
A dreadful Band of gloomy Cares surround me,
And lay strong Siege to my distracted Soul.

S C E N E V.

O R E S T E S, P Y L A D E S, *attended by GREEKS.*

Pyl. Haste, Prince; let us be gone: 'Tis Death
to stay.

Andromache reigns Queen: She gives th' Alarm,
And vows revenge upon the Foes of Pyrrhus.
The people arm and muster in the Streets:
Our Greeks will not be able long to guard
The Palace Gates, and to secure our Flight.
We must be speedy, Sir.

Orest. You may depart,
My Friends—Hermione and I remain.—
Her cruelty has quite undone me!—Go,
And leave me to myself—I'll find her out.

Pyl. Alas, unhappy Princess!—She's no more!
Forget her, Sir, and save yourself with us.

Orest. Hermione no more!—O all ye Powers!

Pyl. Full of Disorder, Wildness in her Looks,
With hands expanded, and dishevell'd Hair,
Breathless and pale, with Shrieks she sought the Temple:
In the mid-way she met the Corps of Pyrrhus:
She started at the Sight; then, stiff with Horror,
Gaz'd frightful! Waken'd from the dire Amaze,

She

48 The DISTREST MOTHER.

She rais'd her Eyes to Heav'n with such a Look,
As spok'e her Sorrows, and reproach'd the Gods:
Then plung'd a Poniard deep within her Breast,
And fell on Pyrrhus, grasping him in Death.

Orest. I thank you, Gods—I never could expect
To be so wretched!—You have been industrious
To finish your Decrees; to make Orestes
A dreadful Instance of your Power to punish;
I'm sing'd out to bear the Wrath of Heaven.

Pyl. You hazard your Retreat by these Delays;
The Guards will soon beset us. Your Complaints
Are vain, and may be fatal.

Orest. True, my Friend:
And therefore 'twas I thank'd the bounteous Gods.
My Fate's accomplish'd!—I shall die content.
Oh bear me hence!—Blow, Winds!—

Pyl. Let us be gone. [call!

Orest. The murder'd Lovers wait me—Hark! They
Nay, if your Blood still reeks, I'll mingle mine.
One Tomb will hold us all.

Pyl. Alas! I fear
His Ravings will return with his Misfortunes.

Orest. I'm dizzy!—Clouds!—Quite lost in utter
Darkness!

Guide me, some friendly Pilot, through the Storm.
I shiver! Oh, I freeze!—So:—Light returns;
'Tis the grey Dawn—See, Pylades! Behold!—
I am encompass'd with a Sea of Blood!—
The crimson Billows!—Oh! my Brain's on Fire!

Pyl. How is it, Sir—Repose yourself on me.

Orest. Pyrrhus, stand off! What wou'd'st thou?—
How he glares!

What envious Hand has clos'd thy Wounds?—Have
at thee.

It is Hermione that strikes.—Confusion!
She catches Pyrrhus in her Arms.—Oh, save me!
How terrible she looks!—She knits her Brow!
She frowns me Dead: She frights me into Madness!
Where am I—Who are you?

Pyl. Alas, poor Prince!

Help to support him.—How he pants for Breath!

Orest. This is most kind, my Pylades.—Oh, why,
Why was I born to give thee endless Trouble?

Pyl. All will go well: He settles into Reason.

Orest. Who talks of Reason? Better to have none,
Than

The DISTREST MOTHER. 49

Than not enough.—Run, some one, tell my Greeks
I will not have 'em touch the King—Now!—Now!
I blaze again!—See there—Look where they come
A Shoal of Furies!—How they swarm about me!
My Terror!—Hide me!—Oh their snaky Locks!
Hark! how they hiss! See! see their flaming Brands!
Now they let drive full at me! How they grin,
And shake their Iron Whips!—My Ears! What
Yelling!

And see Hermione!—She sets them on!—
Thrust not your Scorpions thus into my Bosom!
Oh!—I am stung to Death!—Dispatch me soon!
There—Take my Heart, Hermione!—Tear it out!
Disjoin me!—kill me!—Oh my tortur'd Soul!

Pyl. Kind Heav'n restore him to his wonted Calm!
Oft have I seen him rave: But never thus:
Quite spent!—Assist me, Friends, to bear him off.
Our Time is short; should his strong Rage return,
'Twould be beyond our Power to force him hence.
Away, my Friends!—I hear the Portal open.

SCENE VI.

PHOENIX, attended by Guards.

All, all are fled!—Orestes is not here!—
Triumphant Villains!—The base, giddy Rabble,
Whose Hands should all have been employ'd with Fire
To waste the Fleet, flock'd round the dying Princess:
And, while they stand agaze, the Greeks embark.
Oh, 'tis too plain!—This sacrilegious Murder
Was authoris'd.—Th' Ambassador's Escape
Declares his Guilt.—Most bloody Embassy!
Most unexampled Deed! Where, where, ye Gods,
Is Majesty secure, if in your Temples
You give it no Protection!—See the Queen.

SCENE VII.

PHOENIX, ANDROMACHE, CEPHISA, with Attendants.

Andr. Yes, ye inhuman Greeks! The Time will come
When you shall dearly pay your bloody Deed!
How should the Trojans hope for Mercy from you,
When thus you turn your impious Rage on Pyrrhus!
Pyrrhus, the bravest Man in all your League,
The Man, whose single Valour made you triumph.
Is my Child there?—

Ceph. It is the Corps of Pyrrhus.
The weeping Soldiers bear him on their Shields.

Andr.

50 The DISTREST MOTHER.

Andr. Ill-fated Prince! Too negligent of Life,
And too unwary of the faithless Greeks!
Cut off in the fresh ripening Prime of Manhood,
Ev'n in the Pride of Life; thy Triumphs new,
And all thy Glories in full Blossom round thee!
The very Trojans would bewail thy Fate.

Ceph. Alas, then will your Sorrows never end!

Andr. Oh, never! never—While I live, my Tears
Will never cease; for I was born to grieve.—
Give present Orders for the Fun'ral Pomp: [*To Phœn.*
Let him be rob'd in all his Regal State;
Place round him ev'ry shining Mark of Honour;
And let the Pile, that consecrates his Ashes,
Rise like his Fame, and blaze above the Clouds.

S C E N E VIII.

ANDROMACHE, CEPHISA, *with Attendants.*

Ceph. That Sound proclaims th' Arrival of the
Prince:

The Guards conduct him from the Citadel.

Andr. With open Arms I'll meet him!—Oh, Cephisa!
A springing Joy, mixed with soft Concern,
A Pleasure, which no Language can express,
An Ecstasy, that Mothers only feel,
Plays round my Heart, and brightens up my Sorrow,
Like Gleams of Sun-shine in a lowering Sky.

Though plung'd in Ills, and exercis'd in Care,
Yet never let the noble Mind despair.
When prest with Dangers, and beset with Foes,
The Gods their timely Succour interpose;
And, when our Virtue sinks, o'erwhelm'd with Grief,
By unforeseen Expedients bring Relief.

F I N I S.

